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Statement submitted by The Sant Nirankari Mandal, Delhi, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH SPIRITUAL VISION

— Sant Nirankari Mandal, Delhi (India)

In an International Conference on 21st Century and the Present Period of Moral and Social construction held on 6 to 9 February 1998 at Mount Abu (India) attended by 1500 delegates from 15 countries, with representatives from the Judiciary, Media, Politics, Education, Health, Science, Business, Youth, Women, Culture, Social Service and the Rural Development, it was unanimously declared that the most urgent problem facing us is THE CRISIS OF CHARACTER. Materialistic values and outlook have weakened the fabric of society to the point where selfishness has become endemic in all walks of life. The higher human values that spring from the awareness of the spiritual basis of our being must be re-awakened if the crisis is to be resolved. To facilitate this reawakening, holistic education, encompassing spiritual, moral, cultural and intellectual development is required. Such an education should be made available to people of all ages and backgrounds, to bring about a non-violent spiritual renaissance. This declaration identifies 'Divine Character' as the nucleus of all problems facing mankind today.

The end statement of THE CHARTER OF DEMANDS OF THE PEOPLE would mean Purity, Peace and Prosperity or in other words health, wealth and happiness. Concentrating our attention on the end statement, we find that health, wealth and happiness are inseparable. They all go together and cannot be enjoyed in the true sense if only some have, and others do not have them. The above boons have also to be equally available for all the people. The rosy picture visualized in the Charter of Demands of the People would be sustainable only, if spirituality or divine virtues are ingrained in human character.

Religion is said to be the vehicle of spiritual awakening, moral consciousness and socio-cultural values that suit life in all forms in a well-knit society. But laced with brutal fanaticism, religion has lost its gravity. Instead of uniting it has in itself become the major dividing force and impedance to social development. Physical efficiency and intellectual alertness are dangerous, if spiritual illiteracy prevails. The feuds and agitations that are a common feature of modern society are the result of polluted mind untouched by spiritual lusture. Study of genesis and fall of different civilizations by Arnold Toynbee, a distinguished historian reveals that, "each time the people lost faith in religion, its civilization succumbed to social disintegration. The new civilization that replaced such downfall was inspired by true religion through spiritual awakening."

Spiritual Issue

The fundamental outcome from the UN Rio Conference held on 12 February 2013 for sustainable development was the fact that we are heading towards an economic, social and environmental crisis and the only way to change things is to rethink and recognize it as a spiritual issue, a challenge that goes to the core of who we are as human beings.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are inherently meant for pro-bono publico. Though Imparting Divine Character to society does not find mention in the SDGs related to global challenges, such as poverty, hunger, education and climate change. Yet, it is, in fact, the key to accelerating progress towards the achievement of the entire spectrum of goals. A Global Platform on Gender Equality and Religion was launched at the CSW-62 Session in March 2017. We all need to work across differences to advance the entire SDG agenda. Sant Nirankari Mandal,

Delhi has all along been suggesting a focus on achievement of "Gender Equality Through Spirituality". The Mandal is of the firm opinion that every kind of discrimination or inequality, including gender and socio-economic, can better be sorted out through spirituality.

Self-Awareness. He who is not spiritually aware about himself cannot have any peace and he who does not have peace cannot foster peaceful co-existence. The same divine spirit permeates all whether man or woman, rich or poor. Hence, to treat and love all alike as human beings. In the absence of actual knowledge, God is different for different persons and for the same person on different occasions. The concept of One God for all foresees the idea of one religion for all. Sant Nirankari Mission has succeeded in achieving this objective through living revelation of Fatherhood of God the central seed of all religions, ruling out the emotive events of religious conversions and also resolving the very purpose of interfaith harmony.

Nirankari Mission addressing inequality through social inclusion policies

Physical poverty is a curse and spiritual deprivation is worse. The human mind requires a spiritual universe for itself, anything less will never satisfy a thinking person. The economic terms 'Haves' and 'Have-nots' are seen as "The enlightened" and "The ignorant" in terms of spirituality which can bring both rich and poor on the same ecstatic wavelength. There is no line of demarcation where the poverty ends, and the richness begins. Religion makes poverty an enviable position that oozes with moral superiority. One discovers for himself that the world is one and much bigger than that denoted by our postal address.

Spiritually awakened persons believe that all their assets, material and mental, belong to divinity and we, as trustees only, are ordained to use them for common good of the whole human race. Rising above dogmas of caste, colour, creed they become habitual living a contented life. With the towering trait of tolerance, they lead a self-reliant family life and maintain order in society. This harmonized relationship with self, others and universe brings synergy, sharing and promotes social inclusion with spiritual vision. Spirituality is the tool to empower the poor and rich alike.

Enlightened Family is a blessed family where parents, while fulfilling the material needs of children, equip them with divine thoughts also. Good and pious thoughts help solving intriguing problems, whereas irreligious thoughts spoil even the best set of circumstances. Young children find paradise under the feet of parents and aged parents feel safe in the hands of enlightened children.

Mandal considers all kinds of intoxicants and abuse of alcohol as the root cause of economic and social evils resulting in domestic violence and health hazards. Prohibition by the Mandal has not only saved thousands of families from domestic violence but also empowered women socially, economically and morally. In fine, all reformations start happening due to spiritual awakening leading to social development at roots.

Social Aspects, Our love and relationship with God is essentially measured with reference to our dealings and doings with fellow human beings. With the principal commitment of spiritual awakening, the Mandal participates in several socio-charitable activities to implement the message of Nirankari Babaji, "LIFE GETS A MEANING, IF IT IS LIVED FOR OTHERS". For this purpose, sister organization, Sant Nirankari Charitable Foundation has been formed to channelize the energies of thousands of devotee-volunteers to the growth of society through leading schools, colleges, hospitals, dispensaries, blood-donation camps, tree-plantation and cleanliness drives. All of this is not a parallel effort to spirituality but an attempt that was natural outcome of spiritual awakening. It was not only an endeavour to extend services to needy, there was also an idea to bring down the materialistic race to

remove the reason of hatred and jealousy. An example of same is mass-marriages where there is no pomp and show. This allows rich and poor to come together for the event. Death ceremonies have been made simple to remove any chances of comparisons even at such events. Natural love and oneness of mankind becomes a reality through the actual realization of Fatherhood of God, a cosmic force unifying the whole universe.

Establishing A Spiritual University. Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and his wife Melinda have contributed billions of dollars via their charitable foundation. Appreciating their spirited role, the philosopher writer Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, has given an invaluable suggestion to Mr. Gates that a far greater option for them would be to establish a "Spiritual University" or Universal Institute for research on Spiritual Sciences (Tol Delhi 04.02.2017). In the words of Bill Gates himself, "I have no use for money beyond a certain point. Its utility is entirely in building an organization and getting the resources out to the poorest in the world". Guided by the spiritual definition, the poor are the ignorant. Therefore, the sole aim of education in the Spiritual University would be to educate the soul, bringing forth "A Spiritually Brave New World!